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# CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONTENT IN PERCEPTION

BILL BREWER

## Introduction

Normal perception involves conscious experience of the world. What I call the Content View, (CV), attempts to account for this in terms of the representational content of perception (Brewer, 2011, esp. ch. 4). I offer a new argument here against this view.<sup>1</sup>

Ascription of personal level content, either conceptual or nonconceptual, depends on the idea that determinate predicational information is conveyed to the subject. This determinate predication depends upon the exercise of certain personal level capacities for categorization and discrimination. Exercise of such personal level capacities depends in turn upon conscious selective attention. Yet conscious visual acquaintance with the world is the prior ground for the possibility of any such conscious selective attention. Acquaintance obtains throughout the visual field: where conscious attention is not actually directed as well as where it is. So acquaintance does not depend upon conscious selective attention. Thus, acquaintance is not sufficient for the exercise of the relevant personal level capacities. Exercise of these capacities is nevertheless necessary for personal level content. Therefore visual acquaintance cannot be understood in terms of perceptual content: basic conscious experience of the world is

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<sup>1</sup> As in earlier discussions, I focus throughout on visual perception.

not a matter of anything like the predication involved in perceptual content. It is rather the relational ground for the possibility of such predication.

Clearly every move in this argument needs clarification and defence. I offer this in §1. In §2 I consider the implications for the Content View. §3 concludes.

### 1. The Key Argument

My Key Argument, (KA), may be set out in abbreviated form as follows.

- (1) P-Level Content  $\rightarrow$  P-Level Predication
- (2) P-Level Predication  $\rightarrow$  P-Level Capacities
- (3) P-Level Capacities  $\rightarrow$  Conscious Selective Attention
- (4) Not-(Acquaintance  $\rightarrow$  Conscious Selective Attention)
- (5) So Not-(Acquaintance  $\rightarrow$  P-level Capacities)
- (6) So Not-(Acquaintance  $\rightarrow$  P-level Content)

This section offers elucidation of its constituent notions, and motivation for its substantive premises.

(1) P-Level Content is the proposition that:

a subject, S, is in a conscious perceptual state with personal level representational content.

This means that S's perceptual experience represents it as being the case that certain elements of the world around her are some more or less determinate way.<sup>23</sup> Now, her perceptual experience is a personal level representational state, rather than one deployed only subpersonally. So this more or less determinate predication is conveyed in some way to her.

This is P-Level Predication, the proposition that:

there is a more or less determinate way that certain worldly elements are experientially represented as being to S herself.

Thus:

P-Level Content → P-Level Predication

(2) It follows from P-Level Predication that S is in receipt of more or less determinate predicational information, or misinformation, about the world around her. Now the

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<sup>2</sup> I intend the most general notion of representational content and certainly mean to include the various forms of conceptual and nonconceptual content that have been invoked in philosophical theories of perceptual experience. Influential illustrations of the idea and its variety can be found in Anscombe (1965), Armstrong (1968), Peacocke (1983, 1992), McDowell (1994), Tye (1995, 2000), Dretske (1995), Byrne (2001), Siegel (2010), Pautz (2010), and Schellenberg (2010, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Here and throughout I use the term 'element' to cover objects, features, and regions of the world around the perceiver.

predication involved here is in principle indefinitely variable in what might be called its fineness of grain. More precisely, any specific case will involve the ascription of a more or less determinate property to an object, where this will be one of a range of mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive such determinates of a given determinable; and that determinable may in turn be partitioned into distinct such ranges of determinates in indefinitely many ways. Each of these ranges will contain a determinate, or multiple determinates, whose extensions overlap with that of the determinate ascribed in the initial case in question. Ascriptions of these alternatives would be predications at a different fineness of grain.

A highly simplified example in the case of colour may help to clarify the point.

Suppose we begin with a content ascribing a blue colour to an object, *b*. Candidate more or less determinate predications here might be any of those illustrated in the diagram below, as follows: (a) *b* is blue as opposed to green or purple; (b) *b* is dark blue as opposed to light blue; (c) *b* is medium blue as opposed to navy, duke, light, or sky blue, (d) *b* is  $B_5$ , as opposed to any of the other fine  $B_n$  shades.<sup>4</sup>

|        B        -        -        L        -        -        U        -        -        E        |

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<sup>4</sup> The reality is of course far more complex, with colours more accurately arranged in a 3D solid with the blues occupying a segment of the kind that football players might eat of an orange at half-time. See Munsell (1907) for the original conception and Palmer (1999, ch. 3) for comprehensive review of the major current issues. This additional complexity only adds to the force of my point, with the various candidate predications occupying multiply containing and intersecting solid 3D regions within the blue segment.

	Dark	-	Blue	-			Light	-	Blue	-	
	Navy		Duke		Medium		Sky		Light		
B <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>2</sub>	B <sub>3</sub>	B <sub>4</sub>	B <sub>5</sub>	B <sub>6</sub>	B <sub>7</sub>	B <sub>8</sub>	B <sub>9</sub>	B <sub>10</sub>	B <sub>11</sub>	B <sub>12</sub>

The point generalizes quite straightforwardly to other basic predications made on the basis of visual perception, such as direction, distance, size, orientation, shape, texture, and so on.

Thus, the ascription to the subject, S, of more or less determinate predicational information, or misinformation, about the world around her requires a principled account of where in this indefinite variety we are to locate the correct fineness of grain involved. The argument for premise (3) is that this principled account of the more or less determinate predication involved in perceptual content is to be given in terms of the specific capacities for categorization and discrimination that are exercised in her experience conveying that information. Furthermore, since the predication involved here is at the personal level, the capacities in question must also be personal level capacities: capacities exercised by S herself. The predication involved in personal level perceptual content conveys more or less determinate information (or misinformation) of a specific fineness of grain to the subject herself. Her receipt of information of that fineness of grain rather than any other is determined by her exercise of the relevant specific personal level capacities for categorization and discrimination rather than any other such capacities.

So, from the assumption of P-Level Predication, we may derive P-Level Capacities, the proposition that:

S exercises certain specific personal level capacities for categorization or discrimination in her perceptual experience: those that account for the specific fineness of grain of the more or less determinate predicational worldly information or misinformation that is conveyed to her.

Again, some examples may help to fix and motivate the principle further.

Let us begin with the conceptual paradigm for representational content. Conceiving of S's perceptual experience as a conscious state with conceptual representational content, that a is F, say, commits the theorist to regarding S as actually deploying the relevant predicational concept, 'F', in her experience, regardless of whether or not she endorses the full content in judgement. A certain worldly element is conceptually categorized as F in her experience. This is an exercise of the very conceptual capacity that is equally involved in her judgement that a<sub>1</sub> is F, a<sub>2</sub> is F, a<sub>3</sub> is not F, and so on, as opposed to the distinct capacity conceptually to categorize such things as F', F'', and so on, for other candidate predications at a different fineness of grain.<sup>5</sup> Thus, a version

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<sup>5</sup> The idea that a subject exercising genuinely conceptual categorization in any particular case is equally capable of further applications of the same concept in different cases is one conjunct of Evans' famous Generality Constraint that I accept as a plausible constraint on genuinely conceptual content ascription (Evans, 1982, ch. 4ff). See also his (1985) for the importance of judgements of not-F-ness, as opposed simply to the withholding of judgements of F-ness. For further discussion, see Campbell (1986), Peacocke (1992, ch. 2), and Heck (2000). For dissent, see Travis (1994).

of the claim in question here is that, in the conceptual case, a principled account of the fineness of grain of the more or less determinate predication information that is conveyed to the subject in her perceptual experience is given by the specific capacities for conceptual categorization that she exercises in that perception.<sup>6</sup>

I contend that the general principle extends equally to the nonconceptual case. In terms resonant of Peacocke's related Discrimination Principle (1988, p. 468), this may be formulated as follows.

For each content that may be assigned to a representational state of a subject, there is an adequately individuating account of what makes it the case that her state has that content rather than any other.

Premise (2) of (KA) elaborates this principle further in two ways. First, it emphasizes that the more or less determinate predication involved in conscious perceptual content is personal level predication, accessible in some way to the subject herself. From this it derives the qualification that the relevant adequately individuating accounts are equally to be given in personal level terms. Second, it

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<sup>6</sup> A claim along somewhat similar lines is Davidson's that belief depends on language, "for the only access to the fine structure and individuation of beliefs is through the sentences speakers and interpreters of speakers use to express and describe beliefs" (1986, p. 315). The Davidsonian thesis is vulnerable to objection, though, for introducing inessential epistemic conditions into the metaphysics of mind, by insisting that conditions on determinate belief acquisition should in some way be recognizable or knowable.



insists that such personal level individuating accounts make essential reference to certain capacities that she exercises in her perceptual experience. In the nonconceptual case these are less demanding than any explicit conceptual categorization; but, in order to provide a principled specification of the level of fineness of grain of the predication involved, they must constitute the actual discrimination of a more or less determinate worldly element in such a way as to sustain relevant sorting or other differential behaviour in relation to elements alike in that way, rather than in some similar way at a different fineness of grain. Thus, a second version of the claim in question here is that, in the nonconceptual case, a principled account of the fineness of grain of the more or less determinate predicational information that is conveyed to the subject in her perceptual experience is given by the specific capacities for discrimination that she exercises in her perception that sustain her sorting and other differential behavior in relation to worldly elements alike at the relevant fineness of grain.

Finally, it may be illuminating to comment on the place of considerations of causal antecedence in content determination. Although these surely make a significant contribution to the determination of perceptual content, they fail to engage directly with the central issue of concern here, which is the principles constraining our ascription of more or less determinate fineness of grain in the predicational information, or misinformation, about the world that is conveyed to the subject in perception. In this connection, I claim, we have to appeal in addition to the personal level capacities that are actually exercised in her receipt of precisely that fineness of grain of worldly information, or misinformation.

Thus:

P-Level Predication → P-Level Capacities

(3) Recall that P-Level Capacities is the proposition that S exercises certain specific personal level capacities for categorization or discrimination in her perceptual experience: those that account for the specific fineness of grain of the more or less determinate predication of worldly information or misinformation that is conveyed to her. (3) asserts that her exercise of those capacities depends upon her attention to the elements of the world around her that this predication of information concerns, consciously selecting them precisely for the further processing that constitutes her exercise of the capacities in question.

Categorizing and discriminating require sustained attention to the specific environmental elements concerned that set the norms for like categorization and discrimination in future judgement and sorting or other differential behaviour. Just those elements have to be selected from the full range of alternatives available in order to sustain the capacities in question and control and coordinate the subject's behavior in actually realizing them. This is a necessary consequence of the processing limitations that govern our cognitive lives and shape our conscious personal level perspectives upon the world around us. Furthermore, since the personal level capacities for categorization and discrimination involved are exercised with understanding on the part of the subject herself, in the sense required for her grasp of the perceptual contents in question and their provision of a rational basis for

subsequent thought and action, the attentional selection involved here involves conscious attention.<sup>7</sup>

So P-Level Capacities implies Conscious Selective Attention, the proposition that:

S is consciously attending selectively to certain specific elements of her environment: those that are the focus of her exercise of the relevant personal level capacities.

This premise is highly consonant with the assumptions shaping empirical work on visual attention over the last 50 years and with the main results that have been obtained.<sup>8</sup> The basic assumption lying behind the design and interpretation experimental work on perceptual attention in cognitive psychology is that attention involves a form of subpersonal selection, or filtering, of information for further processing that is essential to deal with the capacity limitations of the brain and with the bodily limitations on simultaneous and sequential action. Wu's reading of the central results of this empirical work is that this subpersonal processing filter is governed at the personal level by the conscious selection of specific environmental elements as targets to guide and control performance on relevant tasks. His general

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<sup>7</sup> See Campbell (2002) and Smithies (2011) for further development of this idea. They propose different accounts of the most fundamental distinctive cognitive role of conscious attention. Both apply in my view to the personal level categorization and discrimination characteristic of normal perceptual content.

<sup>8</sup> See Wu (2014) for detailed discussion of the major paradigms and findings of this work and extended discussion of their philosophical implications. What follows is derived directly from his discussion (esp. chs. 1 & 3).

conclusion is that attention is selection for (mental or physical) action. In any case, the vast body of empirical work and associated psychological theorizing about perceptual attention confirm the central point here, that attention is necessary for the processing in relation to consciously selected elements that constitutes the exercise of personal level capacities for categorization and discrimination.

Thus:

P-Level Capacities → Conscious Selective Attention

(4) Acquaintance is the proposition that:

S is acquainted with certain elements of the world around her.

That is to say, in the current context, that S is visually conscious of those elements. In other words, as I use the notion here, S is acquainted with all and only the worldly elements that are present in her conscious visual field.

Thus, acquaintance obtains in relation to elements of the world around the subject that are not consciously selected in attention as well as to those that are. For conscious acquaintance is precisely what delineates the range of alternatives that are available for possible attentional selection. S may therefore be acquainted with certain elements of her environment and yet actually be directing her conscious selective attention elsewhere or otherwise: not to these particular elements of acquaintance. Indeed, given the capacity limitations noted above, both in terms of neural processing and in

terms of bodily action, there will always be elements of the world around her within her acquaintance that are not currently targets of conscious attentional selection: what is often called the ‘background’ of attention. So it is not the case that Acquaintance in relation certain specific elements of the world around S implies Conscious Selective Attention in relation to those very same worldly elements.

Again the central idea here can be elaborated in relation to relevant empirical work on attention.<sup>9</sup> Relations between consciousness and attention are complex and controversial. For present purposes I steer clear of their most controversial aspects and rely only on claims that may be agreed on all sides. First, although there is compelling evidence of selective attention in the absence of conscious acquaintance, in cases of blindsight, for example (Kentridge, Heywood, and Weiskrantz, 1999, 2004),<sup>10</sup> and even in normal subjects under specially contrived circumstances in

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<sup>9</sup> See Mole (2008, 2014) and Phillips (2016, in press, forthcoming) for helpful reviews and discussion of the most important results here.

<sup>10</sup> Although see Mole (2008, §4) for an interesting argument that the evidence may not be conclusive. This is based upon a distinction between the cue stimulus, of which the subject is not conscious, but which is also claimed not to be an object of his attention, and the cued region of the blind hemifield, to which the subject is indeed attending, yet of which it is also claimed that he is conscious. This last claim, that the blindsighted subject may nevertheless be consciously oriented towards regions of his blind hemifield rests in turn upon an analogy with sighted subjects’ purported conscious orientation to the whole space around them, including regions to which they are not currently perceptually receptive – the region directly behind them, say. Whatever the merits of this idea of conscious orientation to unperceived

which they are not conscious of ‘objects’ present in rapidly changing stimuli (Norman, Heywood, and Kentridge, 2013), we are concerned here only with cases of attention to worldly elements of conscious acquaintance. For the topic is precisely how to understand the nature of normal conscious perceptual experience. Of course the account given must be, and is, consistent with all of these results; but the phenomenon in question is distinct from blindsight and other cases of ‘perception’ without conscious awareness in precisely this regard: it is a person’s conscious experience of the world around her.<sup>11</sup> Second, although attention may be necessary for some forms of consciousness, for example of “very small or very unexpected changes” (Mole, 2008, p. 92), there will in general be many elements of the world around the perceiver that she is acquainted with – that are present in her visual field – but that are not objects of selective visual attention.<sup>12</sup>

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regions of space, it does not obviously entail perceptual acquaintance with those regions as I understand that notion here. So for present purposes, I accept Kentridge et al’s compelling evidence of attention without consciousness in the relevant sense, in certain abnormal perceptual situations. For illuminating discussion of our conscious orientation to the whole space around us, see O’Shaughnessy (1980, vol. II, chs. 7 & 8), Ayers (1993, vol. I, pt. iii), and Martin (1992, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> For skepticism about the very idea of genuine perception without conscious awareness, see Phillips (2016, in press, forthcoming).

<sup>12</sup> Mack and Rock (1998) dispute this claim, insisting that there is “no conscious perception without attention” (p. ix); but they are able to do so only by question-beggingly defining attention as “the process that brings a stimulus to consciousness”

This is simply to repeat the point that attention is genuinely selective. Some amongst the worldly elements of acquaintance get into conscious attention at any time; the remainder do not and yet remain as part of its consciously present background – against which the consciously attentionally selected elements are foregrounded – in ways that elements entirely outside the subject's visual field are not. Conscious attentional selection is only of a subset of the worldly elements with which she is consciously acquainted in perception.

Thus:

Not-(Acquaintance → Conscious Selective Attention)

(5) Not-(Acquaintance → P-level Capacities) follows from (3) and (4)

(6) Not-(Acquaintance → P-level Content) follows from (1), (2), and (5).

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(p. 25). Mole persuasively argues that their experimental results fail to establish their conclusion without begging the question in this way (2008, §3). Inattentional blindness phenomena (Mack and Rock, 1998; Simons and Chabris, 1999; 2007; Block, 2007) may be interpreted in line with Mack and Rock's thesis; but this interpretation is by no means obligatory and is in fact both unpopular and unmotivated.

Thus, S may be acquainted with various elements of the world around her in spite of not being in a conscious perceptual state with personal level representational content concerning those elements.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Against the Content View

According to what I call the Content View, (CV) (2011, esp. ch. 4), the most fundamental account of our normal perceptual relation with the physical world is to be given in terms of the complete representational contents of perceptual experience. In particular, I focus here on the idea that the correct theoretical articulation of the way things are for the subject, S, when she sees the world around her, begins, as its foundation, with the claim that she is in a conscious perceptual state with personal level representational content. The remaining substance of the theory is taken up with questions about the type of representational content in question, the range of contents of that type that are eligible contents for perceptual experience itself, the necessary conditions upon, and consequences of, S being in a perceptual state with a specific content of that type, the relations between the contents of S's perception and her conscious condition at the time, the role of such representational contents of perceptual experience in her perceptual knowledge of the world around her, and so on. This approach can seem almost inevitable; and important arguments from

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<sup>13</sup> See Amijee (2013) for compelling interpretation and elaboration of a similar line of argument from Russell's (1912) theory of knowledge: "acquaintance with an object is not alone sufficient for knowledge of any truths about it [nor, as I argue here, for any perceptual content concerning it]; attention is also necessary" (Amijee, 2013, p. 1184).



Schellenberg (2011) and Siegel (2010, ch. 2) attempt to make that case. My goal in the current section is to deploy (KA), as elaborated in §2, against (CV) and in diagnosis of the error in Schellenberg's argument for (CV).<sup>14</sup>

The crucial first half of Schellenberg's Master Argument, (MA), runs as follows (2011, p. 719).

(P1) If a subject is perceptually related to the world (and not suffering from blindsight etc.), then she is aware of the world.

(P2) If a subject is aware of the world, then the world seems a certain way to her.

(P3) If the world seems a certain way to her, then she has an experience with content C, where C corresponds to the way the world seems to her.

(Con) If a subject is perceptually related to the world (and not suffering from blindsight etc.), then she has an experience with content C, where C corresponds to the way the world seems to her.

I accept (P1) as a straightforward elaboration of the kind of perceptual relatedness that is in question: conscious perceptual experience, or awareness, of the world. So the crucial issue for (MA) concerns relation between the awareness that a subject, S, has of the world around her in perception, and her having an experience with content C.

In order to focus the discussion and to pinpoint the error in (MA) that most clearly illustrates my basic objection to (CV), I adopt a maximally sympathetic interpretation

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<sup>14</sup> I believe that the application to Siegel is relatively straightforward; but I do not establish this here.

of (P2) on which this is also perfectly acceptable. It begins with the Moorean insight that the most explicit description of the conscious character of perceptual experience involves a description of the worldly elements themselves that the subject is apparently aware of in that experience (1922, p. 25; see also Strawson, 1979, pp. 45-6). This description constitutes a plausible understanding of the specific way the world seems her. Thus, we have (P2). If a subject is aware of the world, then the world seems a certain way to her: the way given in the description of the worldly elements that she is apparently aware of.

Next, it is important to distinguish a weak from a strong reading of Schellenberg's conclusion, (Con).

(Con<sub>w</sub>) If a subject is perceptually related to the world (and not suffering from blindsight etc.), then she has an experience with content C, where C corresponds to certain aspects of the way the world seems to her.

(Con<sub>s</sub>) If a subject is perceptually related to the world (and not suffering from blindsight etc.), then she has an experience with content C, where C corresponds to the entirety of the way the world seems to her.

According to (Con<sub>w</sub>), whenever S is perceptually related to the world around her, then certain aspects of the way the world seems to her may be articulated in terms of her being in a conscious perceptual state with personal level representational content.

There are legitimate grounds for concern about this claim.<sup>15</sup> But so far as (KA) is concerned it may yet be true. In this context, its truth depends on that of the claim that whenever S is perceptually related to the world, some of its elements at least are selected, either endogenously or exogenously, by her conscious attention. If the latter claim is correct, and the attention involved selects for further processing constituting the exercise of personal level capacities of categorization and discrimination associated with the more or less determinate predication involved in content C, then there is no obstacle so far as (KA) is concerned to the idea that that experiential content corresponds with certain aspects of the way the world seems to her.

(Con<sub>s</sub>) is refuted by my Key Argument above, though. For, according to premise (4) of (KA), whenever S is perceptually related to the world, there will be elements of her environment that she is consciously acquainted with – that must therefore be included in the description of what she is apparently aware of that constitutes the way things seem to her – that are nevertheless not attentionally selected. Given premises (1)-(3) of (KA), then, these aspects of her awareness cannot correspond with any perceptual experiential content. So, although S is perceptually related to the world, and may have an experience with content C that may indeed capture certain aspects of the way the world seems to her, C cannot possibly correspond to the entirety of the way the world seems to her.

I take it that (CV) is committed to (Con<sub>s</sub>). For its definitive insight is that the way the world seems to S in perception is precisely a representational matter analogous to the

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<sup>15</sup> See in particular Campbell (2002, esp. ch. 6), Travis (2004), Brewer (2011, esp. ch. 4), and Campbell and Cassam (2014).

way the world ‘seems’ to her according to the ‘world view’ consisting of her empirical beliefs. I also read Schellenberg’s argument as intended to establish this version of her conclusion. This is strongly suggested in her explicit discussion and motivation of her premises (P2) and (P3) (2011, §2.1). In any case, I stipulate (CV) in this form as my own target for critical evaluation, and I assume for the remainder of the discussion that this is also the preferred conclusion of Schellenberg’s (MA). So (P3) should be correspondingly strengthened as follows.

(P3<sub>s</sub>) If the world seems a certain way to her, then she has an experience with content C, where C corresponds to the entirety of way the world seems to her.

Then (KA) offers a straightforward diagnosis of the error in (MA). Given our understanding of the way the world seems to S in perception, (P3<sub>s</sub>) is simply false. The notion of content fails to capture the entirety of the way things seem to the subject. For, as I explained above, there will always be unattended worldly elements of acquaintance that are essential to the way things seem to her but do not show up in the more or less determinate predicational information, or misinformation, conveyed by her perceptual content.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Although I doubt that this is her intention, it is interesting to note that there is a point at which Schellenberg herself hints at something like this picture, in her suggestion that Chisholm’s (1957, pp. 50-3) noncomparative looks provide a foundation for the comparative looks that perhaps constitute the predications of perceptual content (2011, p. 722). It would be fruitful to consider further this suggestion that noncomparative looks correspond with unattended elements of

Suppose in objection that we idealize the perceiver.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps ordinary perceivers like S cannot process all of the information contributing to their conscious visual perspective on the world because of various limitations. Consider instead a perceiver, S', not facing the same processing limitations in an otherwise identical perceptual situation to S.<sup>18</sup> So far as (KA) is concerned, there may be a content, C, that corresponds to the entirety of the way the world seems to S'. If so, then should we not also admit that C is the entirety of the way the world seems to S, in the sense that C contains all the information that S could access in some relevant sense? If this is the point of (CV), then the objection from (KA) fails. In reply, though, I claim that, in the absence of the actual exercise of specific capacities for categorization or discrimination, then there is no determinacy in the predicational fineness of grain of the information that would be conveyed to the subject were some such capacities exercised. For this depends precisely on the specifics of the capacities in question; and there are, as we have already seen, indefinitely many alternatives available in connection with the various worldly elements that are present in S's conscious visual perspective. It is the specific capacities for categorization and discrimination that are exercised in attention that determine the predicational fineness of grain of S's

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acquaintance, whereas comparatives necessarily involve the attention required to sustain more or less determinate predication.

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to Matt Parrott for this line of objection.

<sup>18</sup> I ignore for the sake of the argument concerns there may be about the very coherence of a perceiver like S'. If the genuine selectivity of conscious attention is essential to the nature of any visual experience, then the objection does not get off the ground.

personal level perceptual contents. In their absence, there is no saying what exactly C would be, were S' to exercise some such capacities or others in S's situation.<sup>19</sup>

It may also be objected that my discussion has been unfair to (MA) in adopting the Moorean reading of the way the world seems to S. This notion should instead have been more narrowly construed in the way suggested by Schellenberg's seems-content link, very crudely, that "the content of experience corresponds [entirely] to the way the world seems to the experiencing subject" (2011, p. 723). Certainly (P3<sub>s</sub>) is then secured by this definition of the way the world seems to S; and (Con<sub>s</sub>) immediately follows. But this is really just a case of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. For the strength of the (CV) that results – how much, if any, of S's awareness of the world in perception is accounted for by her having an experience with content C – is precisely the strength of the (CV) that is fed into the argument at (P2). And, as we have already seen, (KA) demonstrates that the entirety of S's awareness of the world cannot possibly correspond with the way the world seems to her in this narrower sense. So we are back to the point that (KA) refutes the most natural paradigm of (CV) that is my explicit target here. Schellenberg's (MA) attempts to conjoin innocent versions of both (P2) and (P3) in defence of (CV); but (KA) establishes that this cannot be done.

(KA) therefore constitutes a quite general argument against the central (CV) contention that the correct theoretical articulation of the way things are for the subject, S, when she perceives the world around her, begins, as its foundation, with

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<sup>19</sup> See Stazicker (2011) for a closely related argument for the constitutive dependence of certain aspects of conscious vision on conscious attention that exploits the indeterminacy of visual consciousness in the absence of conscious attention.

the claim that she is in a conscious perceptual state with personal level representational content. Furthermore, my discussion of (MA) strongly suggests that this (CV) contention effectively involves a fatal equivocation on the way things seem to the subject in perception, between how things are consciously for the subject in relation to the world in perception, on the one hand, and what more or less determinate predicational information is actually conveyed to the subject as a result of this along with her categorizing or discriminating attentional selection amongst the worldly elements of her conscious acquaintance, on the other.

#### 4. Conclusion

There are aspects of our conscious perceptual relation with the world around us that cannot be captured in terms of the representational content of perceptual experience. I myself subscribe instead to an account of these by appeal to a fundamental layer of perceptual consciousness consisting in the subject's standing in a relation of conscious acquaintance with particular mind-independent elements of the world around her (2011, esp. ch. 5). In any case, the principled obstacles to a wholly representational account of perceptual consciousness set out here undermine the prospects of any orthodox Content View of perception.<sup>20</sup>

## **References**

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